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ABSTRACT

This report presents the conclusions and recommendations of a residential colloquium concerning modern languages for the 1980's, attended by 70 representatives of various sectors and levels of the educational system. The colloquium was a response to widespread concern about the crisis in language learning in the United Kingdom. The colloquium combined sessions designed to establish the present state of modern language study, with the activity of six separate working parties proposing concrete solutions relating to specific areas of the problem. It was recognized that language teaching today is affected by many unplanned and unforeseen complications resulting both from changes in the structure of education and from developing teacher techniques. It was noted that some of the practices that have been used during the past decade appear to have little theoretical justification. (NCR)

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November, 1976

Modern languages for the 1980s

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Report of a Colloquium held at the
University of Sussex, 16-18 September 1976,
organised by the School of European Studies
in cooperation with the Centre for
Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Edited by C G Bearne, University of Sussex
and C V James, CILT

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Introduction

This report presents the conclusions and recommendations of a residential colloquium, attended by some 70 representatives of different sectors and levels of the educational system, which was held at the University of Sussex on 16-18 September 1976. It was organised by the School of European Studies in collaboration with the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT), which provided active participation as well as statistical and other background information. If the title *Modern languages for the 1980s* was conceived as being interrogative as well as prospective, it is because the colloquium was a direct response to increasingly widespread concern at what is felt to be a serious and ironically inopportune crisis in language learning in the United Kingdom.

While the colloquium was necessarily concerned with language learning at all levels and with the national situation as a whole, the focus was sharpened for effectiveness in several ways. Particular attention was paid to the provision of modern language courses at secondary level and to the relationship between this provision and recruitment of students into tertiary education. The interplay within the curriculum between French and other modern languages—an important feature of the dynamics of the present situation—was studied with reference to the difficulties increasingly experienced by these 'minority' languages. In order that the interaction of the various levels of the educational system in relation to the problem might be examined in adequate detail, the colloquium took as a working model the current situation in the South-East. It goes without saying that the participation of representatives of the relevant national consultative bodies, particularly as chairmen of plenary and working party sessions, was designed to ensure that the national situation was kept constantly in view, and the organisers are confident that the conclusions reached, with perhaps some differences of emphasis, are applicable to many other parts of Britain.

The colloquium combined plenary sessions designed to establish factually the present state of modern language study with the activity of six separate working parties, operating concurrently over two days with a view to proposing concrete solutions relating to specific areas of the problem. Four plenary sessions dealt successively with secondary schools (both maintained and independent), universities, polytechnics and colleges, and LEA advisory services within the area of the five Local Education Authorities of Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire and Kent. The working parties dealt, respectively, with the influence of school reorganisation on language provision; variations in motivation or demand for different languages; regional rationalisation of resources; the zoning of language provision in schools; *ab initio* language teaching in higher and further education; and school examinations and entrance requirements at tertiary level. A final plenary session was devoted to summing up and to receiving the reports and recommendations of the working parties—the recommendations being addressed to the Department of Education and Science, to the Schools Council and to other bodies represented at the colloquium itself. Edited versions of these reports and recommendations form the substance of this publication.

While these recommendations must obviously speak for themselves, the degree of consensus at the colloquium confirmed amply that we are facing a serious problem in this area. Indeed, it was suggested that our loosely-articulated educational system, given the difficulty of establishing a balance between national needs and the claims of local autonomy, might not be well equipped to tackle the problem, while several speakers warned that for this and other reasons it might not be possible to reverse the present trend before the 1990s. At all events, the colloquium recognised that language teaching today is affected by many unplanned and unforeseen complications resulting both from changes in the structure of education and from developments in teaching techniques, and that some of the practices that have come into being over the past decade appear to have little theoretical justification.

It was the hope of the organisers—who are themselves planning follow-up activities—that this colloquium might stimulate an expression of concern from other interested groups. It is gratifying to find that this is now taking place, as it is to see the present report—however useful its own recommendations may prove to be—as a first stage in a continuing, collective effort to ensure that, in the area of language learning, this country is equipped to meet the needs of the late 1970s and the 1980s.

Cecil Jenkins
Dean, School of European Studies
University of Sussex

The plenary sessions

The work of the colloquium was divided roughly equally between plenary sessions and working parties. The former were devoted to establishing the facts of the teaching of languages in the five LEAs and were based on previously circulated papers, each of which was introduced briefly as a prelude to discussion.

There were five plenary sessions:

I. *Language provision in schools: problems of diversification*
Speakers: D W Usherwood, Headmaster, Priory Comprehensive School, Lewes (maintained)
M D'Aubeney, Senior Modern Languages Master, Sevenoaks School (independent)
Chairman: M R Wigram, HMI, Staff Inspector for Modern Languages

II. *Language recruitment in tertiary education: patterns and problems in universities*
Speakers: R A Andrews (Kent), C G Bearne (Sussex), Professor E E Papst (Southampton), B P Pockney (Surrey)
Chairman: C G Bearne, Director of the Language Laboratories, University of Sussex

III. *Language recruitment in tertiary education: patterns and problems in polytechnics*
Speakers: E S H Cahm (Portsmouth), Dr C H Cobb (Kingston), R Skan (Brighton)
Chairman: J E G White, Chairman, Standing Conference of Heads of Modern Languages in Polytechnics and Other Colleges (SCHML)

IV. *The Local Education Authority viewpoint*
Speakers: Miss J Blackwood (Kent), R B Fletcher (Surrey), E C Garner (West Sussex), Miss G Gilles (East Sussex), A A Rossi (Hampshire)
Chairman: J Rendel-Jones, Chief Education Officer, East Sussex

V. *Summing up*
Speaker: C V James, Deputy Director, Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT)
Chairman: Dr C Jenkins, Dean of the School of European Studies, University of Sussex

Many of the points raised in the first plenary session were taken up again in the fourth. The two sessions are therefore treated together below, as also are sessions II and III.

Schools (Plenary sessions I and IV)

More pupils than ever before are now given the opportunity to learn a foreign language, usually French, which is virtually the only first foreign language on offer in the South-East. German is taught quite widely as second foreign language; Spanish much less and Italian even more rarely. Neither Spanish nor Italian is usually taught to 'A' level. A few schools in some of the authorities offer Russian. Among the factors determining this pattern of provision are:

(a) the teaching of French in primary schools
(b) the reorganisation of secondary schools
(c) the adoption of the common core curriculum in secondary schools
(d) economic pressures, especially concerning staff/pupil ratios
(e) the practice of mixed ability teaching.

The cumulative effect of these developments is disadvantageous to modern languages, especially Italian, Russian and Spanish. Teaching French in primary schools had been expected to facilitate the earlier introduction of second foreign languages, but in fact this has not happened. Instead, the existence of French in feeder schools is dictating its continuation in secondary schools, where it has sometimes displaced the other languages. The adoption of a common core curriculum makes it impossible to introduce a second foreign language in the lower forms; when other languages, especially Italian, Russian and Spanish are offered, they are generally studied for only two years and do not therefore usually lead to 'A' level. The precise effect of school reorganisation depends on the system of tiers adopted; in some systems even the upper forms of small schools cannot offer languages other than French because of the economic constraints affecting staff/pupil ratios. The wide range of subject options inevitably reduces the number of pupils opting for languages and schools cannot afford to employ specialist staff to teach the small classes that result. When languages are taught to mixed ability groups in larger classes, the frustration of the more able pupils decreases their motivation for further language study. The overall demand for language courses is affected by the absence of demonstrable market value of knowledge of languages except in support of expertise in other subjects. The type of language proficiency acquired at school is not vocationally useful.

Tertiary education (Plenary sessions II and III)

Neither the universities nor the polytechnics in the area form homogeneous groups but they all share certain common experiences and are tending to evolve similar solutions to the problems that have arisen.

Though the number of people learning languages within the tertiary institutions is increasing, they have all experienced a drop in applications for specifically language courses, together with a notable change in demand from language and literature to language in combination with a range of other subjects.

In their comments on the situation in schools, the universities make several complaints: modern teaching methods are producing students with insufficient theoretical foundation for their language skills; mixed ability teaching leads to lower attainment. The polytechnics welcome the appearance of candidates with unusual combinations of subjects (eg French with mathematics), but do not find the sort of language attainment resulting from GCE courses appropriate to the kinds of training they offer. More suitable qualifications are represented by the examinations of the Royal Society of Arts, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry etc. The chief factor determining recruitment of students of languages is career prospects. Polytechnics have always offered more vocationally orientated courses than universities, which are now having to follow suit by offering a greater range of combined degrees and courses in which languages play a secondary or ancillary role. In both universities and polytechnics the shortage of applicants with 'A' level qualifications, especially in languages other than French, has led to a progressive lowering of entrance requirements; but whereas polytechnics have always considered it normal to teach even the common languages *ab initio,* this requirement fits less easily into the universities, which are nevertheless beginning to develop such courses. Facilities for independent language study, based on the use of language laboratories and programmed materials, are being improved in response to increased demand.

Summing up (Plenary session V)

Participation in BBC courses such as *Kontakte,* demand for self-instructional materials and entries for examinations taken in further education courses indicate that there is more language learning in Great Britain today than ever before. The biggest rise has been in French and German, but the study of Italian and Spanish has also gone up. Of the five common languages, only Russian has decreased. Independent study and demand for service courses at universities and polytechnics are also on the increase. All this shows a desire for language proficiency for practical use in employment.

The range of language courses available in maintained schools has decreased, and the reduced demand for specialist courses of language in tertiary institutions is causing great concern. In some ways these two developments are related, but they are not simply cause and effect. The reduction in language courses in schools is the unplanned and unforeseen consequence of a series of innovations, most of which were not directly concerned with language teaching. There are more pupils learning languages in schools now than ever before, but the overwhelming majority of them are offered French only. The prospects for the other languages, except possibly German, are poor unless extraordinary steps are taken. Italian, Russian and Spanish can increase only at the expense of French. Tertiary institutions cannot expect an increase of applicants with 'A' level and will be obliged increasingly to lower their entrance requirements and even to teach languages, especially German, Italian, Russian and Spanish, *ab initio.*

Even in schools, a decision to take up a language option now depends chiefly on its potential value in employment. This applies to an even greater extent in the choice of courses at universities or polytechnics; if these institutions are to attract more students, they must apparently offer more vocationally orientated courses. An increase in the provision of languages in schools will not automatically increase applications for language courses at tertiary level.

An important role in language teaching seems likely to be played in future by further education establishments, both by offering languages not available in most schools and by aiming to satisfy vocational needs.

Reports of the working parties

Working party A: **The influence of school reorganisation on language provision**
Chairman: Dr C G Hadley, Chairman, Schools Council Modern Languages Committee

1 The way in which the reorganisation of schools into comprehensives influences the provision of courses in foreign languages depends on the type of organisation adopted. Middle schools and junior high schemes create problems for both first and second foreign languages.

1.1 For the first foreign language, both the necessary continuity and the motivation can be seriously affected, especially where there is a shortage of specialist staff.

1.2 The second foreign language has to begin later, and if the study of the first foreign language has been unsuccessful, the pupil's motivation may be undermined.

2 The conventional 'drip-feed' method of language teaching is wasteful and can erode motivation.

2.1 If French has been studied at primary school, pupils may take up to eight years to reach 'O' level or CSE. This is too long for motivation to be sustained.

2.2 The feasibility of intensive language courses in secondary schools should be investigated.

3 Though not all pupils can benefit from the study of a foreign language, and if staffing resources decline they may have to be concentrated on those that can, all pupils are entitled to the opportunity to learn a foreign language. Teaching foreign languages to all pupils in a comprehensive school should not significantly affect the performance of the more able.

3.1 From the end of the first year, pupils learning foreign languages should be arranged in homogeneous groups. Mixed ability teaching is not suitable for languages and should be resisted even in schools where it is practised for all other subjects. It requires skill, energy and resources beyond those possessed by most teachers.

3.2 Setting is essential, not only to guarantee the motivation and progress of the more able, but to make it possible to provide meaningful courses for the less able.

3.3 A lot of work is being done on the subject of mixed ability teaching, but not in any systematic way. National coordination is urgently needed, and there should be more investigation of techniques of testing the efficacy of this kind of teaching.

4 The size of the school is important for the introduction and successful teaching of a second foreign language.

4.1 The free working of an options system in a small school militates against the learning of foreign languages. In such circumstances, linguistically gifted pupils should be directed into courses of second foreign languages, as is done in independent schools.

4.2 In the comprehensive school system in general the health of languages other than French can be improved only if it is possible to introduce them in a rationalised way on a regional basis as alternative first foreign languages.

5 The position of languages other than French in the sixth form gives cause for great concern.

5.1 The presence of a wide range of easier options may be important, but languages suffer also from not having a powerful careers appeal.

5.2 The possibility of cooperation between groups of schools to ensure the study to 'A' level of a spread of languages other than French within a given area should now be investigated, though problems of interlocking timetables are likely to be great.

5.3 The sixth form college or a tertiary institution may offer a possible solution on economic grounds in areas where comprehensive schools are small.

5.4 In any case there is a definite need for intensive courses in these languages at sixth form level, where there may be a revival of demand for new foreign languages.

5.5 It should be possible for sixth formers to maintain contact with languages in minority time.

5.6 Tertiary institutions may have to become more flexible in their entry requirements for students wishing to specialise in languages.

Recommendations

to LEAs

1. LEAs should conduct a firm and coherent policy of rationalisation in order to minimise the difficulties of languages in the upper secondary school.

2. Schools should be urged to consider ways in which the continued study of languages other than French can be ensured.

to the Schools Council

3. The feasibility of intensive language courses in secondary schools should be studied.

4. The efficacy of mixed ability teaching of foreign languages should be investigated.

Working party B: **Variation in motivation and demand**
Chairman: Mrs R M Wright, Secretary, Joint Council of Language Associations

1 An important factor influencing the demand for language courses at tertiary level is the change in motivation for language learning which is visible in secondary schools.

1.1 Attitudes toward taking up specific languages in secondary schools include:

French : + continuation of primary school course
+ proximity and accessibility of France
+ French as a *lingua franca*

German : + German is a prestige language
+ acceptability as ancillary to science and business studies

Italian : – high proportion of available teachers are Italian nationals unskilled in teaching the less able
– possibilities therefore contingent on ability of other teachers to offer it

Russian : + acceptability as ancillary to science
± popularity and prospects vary with political climate
– too complex for all but the most able
– irregular supply of teachers

Spanish : + comparative ease of pronunciation
+ parental influence related to tourism
+ importance of Latin America

1.2 Success in learning the first foreign language provides motivation for beginning a second. Recruitment of classes for second foreign languages depends initially on pupil choice but also on parental influence. This combination contributes to success and reinforces motivation.

1.3 In the fourth year options are taken up firstly to make a balanced curriculum, but career prospects are also considered, and this introduces parental influence. The proliferation of options tends to militate against languages.

1.4 In the sixth form the factors determining choice seem to be:
(a) career prospects
(b) parental influence, often with economic overtones
(c) teachers' influence

1.5 'A' level syllabuses also influence choice. Potential candidates may resist primarily literature-based syllabuses, but teachers may distrust new alternatives. Proposals for a new 'A' level examination in language are welcomed.

1.6 Not all teachers and careers advisers are sufficiently aware of the courses and revised syllabuses now on offer. Improved counselling might increase the demand for language courses.

2 In the provision of *ab initio* courses for older pupils there is a divergence of practice between comprehensive and independent schools.

2.1 In independent schools, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish *must* be offered as options, small classes are considered viable, and courses may last two or three years to 'O' level or CSE.

2.2 In comprehensive schools, if German, Italian, Russian and Spanish are offered at all a reduced timetable of one or two hours a week is considered adequate, backed up by programmed materials for use in unsupervised time. The proliferation of options leads to small language classes, which are considered uneconomic.

2.3 The role of further education establishments in providing a wider choice of language courses is becoming increasingly important.

3 Foreign visits and exchanges increase motivation for language learning. Opportunity to visit the country whose language is being studied makes the pupil's school course more obviously relevant to his private life.

3.1 On the other hand, absence of satisfactory arrangements with a given country (eg Italy and Spain) may act as a deterrent.

3.2 Foreign language assistants are extremely important in motivating pupils to language learning. The twenty per cent reduction in number is bound to have an immediate and a long-term detrimental effect on language performance, as well as undermining agreements for reciprocal exchanges.

4 At tertiary level the problem of motivating students is less acute. Courses with obvious vocational orientation are becoming more popular and applicants are now more critical and realistic in their appraisal of the courses on offer.

4.1 When sixth formers have studied one foreign language plus another subject to 'A' level, their choice of course at tertiary level tends to push the language into a secondary or ancillary position. It is only when they have taken two languages at 'A' level that they opt for a language course.

4.2 There is some evidence that modular courses are increasing in popularity because:

(a) they offer greater flexibility in combining subjects;
(b) they facilitate transfer from one course to another;
(c) they delay final commitment to a specialist course;
(d) they provide a safety net by which non-completers may receive credit for courses done.

5 At several levels within schools, language courses may precede or follow courses of European Studies.

5.1 Some European Studies courses begin in the first year and last one or two years. They aim to introduce pupils to a number of foreign cultures before they opt for a language-based study of any one.

5.2 Other courses are offered to less able pupils as alternatives to or substitutes for conventional language courses. Whether such courses can overcome the problems of the slower learner, while retaining worthwhile academic content, is a subject that requires further study.

Recommendations

to LEAs

1. The twenty per cent reduction in the number of foreign language assistants is to be deplored.

to the Schools Council

2. The Schools Council should conduct critical surveys of the following in order to encourage better practice:
   (a) Patterns of demand for language courses in secondary schools, taking into account the wishes of parents as well as teachers, and especially the needs and aspirations of sixth formers;
   (b) Patterns of language provision in secondary schools;
   (c) The respective merits of preceding or following a language course by a course of European Studies.

to universities and polytechnics

3. Bearing in mind the extent to which potential students are motivated by career aspirations, universities and polytechnics should make known the extent to which British industry is actually concerned in promoting language study through sponsored places and other such arrangements.

Working party C: **Regional rationalisation of resources**
Chairman: J A Robinson, Chairman, National Association of Language Advisers (NALA)

1 The term *region* should be differently defined according to the educational level at which rationalisation is envisaged: for the schoolteacher, the LEA is a region; for a university, a rational region may cut across several LEA boundaries.

1.1 Regional rationalisation of resources is possible only if planned on a firm informational basis. However, much of the essential data is not known, eg the disposition of languages in schools, details of university graduates with combinations of subjects including languages, availability of staff able to teach minority languages etc. CILT could play a central role in disseminating such information.

1.2 In-service training of teachers (INSET) may encourage a measure of regional cooperation, but it excludes university and polytechnic language departments which have no links with teacher training.

Recommendations

to LEAs

1. There should be greater flexibility in the application of rules for reimbursement of teachers' expenses, so that teachers might call on the resources and expertise of tertiary establishments outside their own LEA.
2. The study of special skills in minority languages in sixth forms should be encouraged by utilisation of the resources of higher and further education, especially through intensive courses.
3. Information on vocational outlets should be compiled in association with local industries. Case studies of students who have used their language skills in employment should be drawn up.
4. A register of teachers of minority languages should be compiled in order to facilitate schemes for cooperation.

to the five LEAs jointly

5. An inventory of available resources (eg language laboratories, various kinds of course) should be made in order to facilitate schemes for coordinated exploitation.

to universities and polytechnics

6. Information about language courses should be comprehensive and more widely distributed in a standard form intelligible to the sixth former. Careers teachers and advisers should be kept up to date by tertiary institutions acting together.

Working party D: **Zoning language provision in schools**
Chairman: Dr G D Morley, CILT

1 More than one language should be offered as first foreign language; French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish should all be on offer somewhere in each area, either as first or as second foreign language.

1.1 The practical measures recommended should be applicable to other areas as well as the South-East; they apply to urban areas and to rural areas in which cooperation between institutions is geographically practicable.

1.2 The following terms are used below:

agreed variation: agreement between a group of schools to vary the foreign languages on offer.

zoned provision: (zoning) agreement between a number of schools (and possibly other educational establishments) to make grouped provision of courses in minority languages which cannot be offered in individual schools.

2 The present unplanned predominance of one language should be replaced by a system of agreed variation of first foreign language, either between French and German or from among French, German and Spanish.

2.1 A group of up to six schools might form a suitable number for agreed variation of first foreign language.

2.2 In most instances a school would offer one first foreign language only; in exceptional circumstances (eg in very large comprehensives) several languages might be offered as parallel first foreign languages.

3 For the second foreign language, a system of agreed variation should be adopted in order to ensure that in any given area there are courses of French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish available.

3.1 There are different purposes in studying first and subsequent foreign languages. Whereas the study of the first foreign language has a broadly educational object, the study of a second foreign language has somewhat different aims, including providing for the able pupil and meeting vocational needs.

3.2 There is no optimum starting age for a second foreign language. Starting at twelve or thirteen provides a less hurried programme to 'O' level or CSE; but there are advantages in starting at fourteen, provided that ample hours are available.

3.3 The desirable proportions in which French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish should be offered may vary in different areas.

4 To implement agreed variation of languages it may sometimes be necessary to make grouped provision by zoning, eg by sending all pupils to one institution for lessons in a second foreign language. In parts of Hampshire such arrangements already exist.

4.1 The viability of such arrangements on a larger scale should be tested by carrying out pilot schemes in other LEAs.

4.2 It is accepted, with some reservations, that sometimes a system of zoned provision will involve bussing, but participating institutions should be clo[illegible]ogether in order to reduce this to a minimum.

5 Possible alternatives to offering a second foreign language in one institution only and bringing pupils to it include:
(a) joint appointment of teachers between two schools;
(b) appointment of peripatetic teachers.

5.1 Where there are sixth form colleges, they might act as language support centres for the schools in their area.

6 The teaching of minority languages suffers because of the poor career prospects it offers the teachers.

6.1 Intending teachers should therefore be encouraged to train in more than one language.

Recommendations

to the DES and LEAs

1. There should be agreed variation of first foreign language between schools in any given area.

2. There should be agreed variation of second foreign language to ensure the availability of French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish in any given area.

to LEAs

3. Pilot schemes should be undertaken to test the feasibility of zoned provision based on a school, a sixth form college or a further education college.

4. The provision of courses in minority languages should be facilitated where necessary by:
(a) joint appointment of language teachers between two institutions;
or
(b) the appointment of peripatetic teachers.

to the DES Advisory Committee on Teacher Training

5. Intending teachers of modern languages in secondary schools should be encouraged and enabled to train to teach more than one language.

Working party E: **Ab initio teaching in higher and further education**
Chairman: B P Pockney, Director of Russian Studies, University of Surrey

1 The predominance of French in schools is distorting all modern language provision. This is now being felt at tertiary level.

1.1 The assumption that the most suitable first foreign language to be taught to English-speaking children is French should be seriously questioned.

1.2 The teaching of English as a foreign language is becoming increasingly important in colleges of further education and sometimes takes up resources formerly devoted to foreign language teaching.

2 There is little difference in demand for the various languages in vocational courses, but there are some regional variations.

2.1 Traditional 'O' and 'A' level courses do not equip students with a knowledge of foreign languages that is sufficient or suitable for vocational purposes.

2.2 Colleges of further education therefore have to mount vocationally orientated courses in all languages, including French.

2.3 The most suitable examinations are set by such bodies as the Institute of Linguists, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Royal Society of Arts.

3 Intensive language teaching is more effective than the 'drip-feed' method, even if courses comprise the same amount of material.

3.1 Some language teaching at tertiary level is effectively *ab initio* even if the students have gained 'O' level.

4 There are three possible types of intensive *ab initio* courses for students of sixteen-plus which should now be developed:

4.1 Short courses of four to six weeks, designed either as 'taster' courses or to boost performance, for pupils still at school.

4.1/1 Such courses may be slotted into certain periods of the academic year at universities, polytechnics and colleges without great expense.

4.1/2 They would ideally be planned at tertiary institutions in cooperation with groups of schools.

4.2 Courses of two to three months at polytechnics or further education colleges in response to local demands for language training for specific purposes.

4.2/1 These demands are sporadic but may be met by institutions with sufficiently flexible organisation.

4.2/2 Such courses should be encouraged in order to meet the needs of international trade etc.

4.3 One year intensive courses for intending university and polytechnic students in languages which they have not been able to study at school.

4.3/1 Such courses would embrace all languages but would concentrate initially on German, Italian, Russian and Spanish, envisaging later extension to Japanese, Chinese etc.

4.3/2 Students would already have the necessary entrance qualifications and would have been offered places in universities or polytechnics, conditional on successful completion of the intensive course.

4.3/3 The emphasis in the courses would be wholly linguistic, with no attempt to teach literary criticism or other related studies.

4.3/4 The courses would culminate in the award of a diploma.

4.3/5 They would be open also to postgraduates, teachers, employees in industry and commerce etc. to whom the possession of a diploma would be useful.

4.3/6 They would be offered at a small number of institutions on a regional basis, by agreement.

Recommendations

to CILT

1. (a) Working parties should be set up to explore the position of 'minority' languages and encourage universities, polytechnics and colleges to agree on the planned development of specialist centres in different languages.

   (b) The working parties should also encourage research into the methodology of intensive language teaching and attempt to obtain financial support from outside bodies.

to all the appropriate bodies

2. Intensive *ab initio* courses of the types outlined above should be developed in universities, polytechnics and colleges:
   (a) four to six week 'taster' courses;
   (b) two to three month custom-made courses;
   (c) one year courses in minority languages.

to the DES and UGC

3. When financial circumstances permit, a national centre should be established in order to provide intensive language teaching of minority languages and to foster appropriate research.

Working party F: **School examinations and entry requirements at tertiary level**
Chairman: G R Potter, Director of Education, West Sussex

1 The present 'A' level examinations do not satisfactorily meet the diverse aims of sixth forms.

1.1 There is a double need for a terminal sixth form examination and an acceptable test for entry into tertiary education. There should be a choice, for example between literature and other studies in the element which complements language.

1.2 The attainment of more closely specified linguistic proficiency should be the main aim.

2 A graded series of tests of discrete language skills (derived from the four macroskills) should be developed. This would be applicable at a number of stages running from before 'O' level to after 'A' level.

2.1 The tests would make it possible to draw a profile of individual student performance. A student might wish, for example, to achieve particular stages in particular skills for his own satisfaction or for vocational purposes (eg a sixth form scientist who wished to develop his reading skill), but certain stages would be equated with the language proficiency required at 'O' and 'A' levels.

2.2 The tests could therefore be integrated into the school examination system, both as it now is and as it may be in the future. They would also be applicable to adult students.

3 As a first step, there should be careful study and definition of the levels of skill appropriate to each stage.

3.1 GCE boards could be asked to mount a pilot scheme at appropriate stages, and other bodies might cater for the lower or higher stages.

3.2 The scheme would encourage the continuation of language study in the sixth form and make for more viable groups, especially in languages other than French, in which the smallness of classes is now creating such acute problems.

3.3 The language 'A' level would require a profile showing certain minimum achievement in the language tests, plus a further component in which there would be a choice between literature and other studies.

4 There are already a number of bodies examining at a wide range of levels (CSE, GCE, Institute of Linguists, Royal Society of Arts etc). This proposal does not involve the introduction of a completely new examination but the integration of existing structures into a new system.

4.1 Work already undertaken—eg on the Unit/Credit scheme (Council of Europe), the defined syllabus (Schools Council Modern Languages Project), and the sixteen-plus examination proposals (Joint Matriculation Board and certain northern CSE Boards)—supports the view that such a system, though complex, is both desirable and possible.

4.2 A number of articles on this theme have already been published. They include:
Page, B W, 'An alternative to sixteen-plus', *Modern Languages* LV-1; March 1974;
Harding, A, and B Page, 'An alternative model for modern language examinations', *AVLA Journal*, 12-13, Winter 1974;
Downes, P J, 'Aiming at the right target', *TES* (3201), 8.10.76.

5 The scheme may be regarded as a 'ladder', with certain stages externally examined, eg:

3	6	9	12	15	18
RSA		OL	AL	Institute of Linguists	

The remaining stages—1, 2, 7, 8 etc.—could be internally examined by a standardised battery of tests.

5.1 At the external assessments an award should be permitted at one stage lower than that entered, eg stage 5 pass at stage 6 examination. This would give greater flexibility to the certification.

5.2 Initially work should concentrate on describing the stages and defining the skill levels required.

5.3 The system would stimulate wider interest in more advanced language work as well as encouraging a progressive approach to both language learning and assessment.

5.4 It would also facilitate continuity when pupils/students move from one institution to another, particularly in secondary education.

5.5 The scheme could be introduced in parallel with the existing system. From the distribution of 'A' level and minority-time courses in typical schools it seems that it could be introduced within the present pattern and with existing resources.

6 The language element has been stressed because of its implications for a wide range of specialist and non-specialist language and other studies. The complementary component, however, also requires attention.

6.1 A review of the nature and content of the present literary studies and the methods of assessing them should be carried out.

Recommendations

to examining bodies

1. A graded system of testing based on more closely specified degrees of linguistic performance from before 'O' level to after 'A' level should be developed.

to the Schools Council

2. In collaboration with examining bodies, the Schools Council should initiate experimental work on graded tests which, if found effective, could be integrated into the public examinations system in secondary and further education.

Summary of recommendations

Though most of the recommendations are addressed to specific bodies, implementation of many of them would require the participation or agreement of a number of others. They are listed below in alphabetical order of the first body to which they are addressed.

CILT

(1) Working parties should be set up to explore the position of 'minority' languages and encourage universities, polytechnics and colleges to agree on the planned development of specialist centres in different languages. (E1(a))

(2) The working parties should also encourage research into the methodology of intensive language teaching and attempt to obtain financial support from outside bodies. (E1(b))

DES

(1) There should be agreed variation of first foreign language between schools in any given area. (D1)

(2) There should be agreed variation of second foreign language to ensure the availability of French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish in any given area. (D2)

(3) Intending teachers of modern languages in secondary schools should be encouraged and enabled to train to teach more than one language. (D5)

(4) When financial circumstances permit, a national centre should be established in order to provide intensive language teaching of minority languages and to foster appropriate research. (E3)

Examining bodies

A graded system of testing based on more closely specified degrees of linguistic performance from before 'O' level to after 'A' level should be developed. (F1)

LEAs

(1) Schools should be urged to consider ways in which the continued study of languages other than French can be ensured. (A2)

(2) LEAs should conduct a firm and coherent policy of rationalisation in order to minimise the difficulties of languages in the upper secondary school. (A1)

(3) Pilot schemes should be undertaken to test the feasibility of zoned provision based on a school, a sixth form college or a further education college. (D3)

(4) The provision of courses in minority languages should be facilitated where necessary by:
   (a) joint appointment of language teachers between two institutions,
   or
   (b) the appointment of peripatetic teachers. (D4)

(5) The study of special skills in minority languages in sixth forms should be encouraged by utilisation of the resources of higher and further education, especially through intensive courses. (C2)

(6) A register of teachers of minority languages should be compiled in order to facilitate schemes for cooperation. (C4)

(7) There should be greater flexibility in the application of rules for reimbursement of teachers' expenses, so that teachers might call on the resources and expertise of tertiary establishments outside their own LEA. (C1)

(8) Information on vocational outlets should be compiled in association with local industries. Case studies of students who have used their language skills in employment should be drawn up. (C3)

(9) An inventory of available resources (eg language laboratories, various kinds of course) should be made in order to facilitate schemes for coordinated exploitation. (C5)

(10) The twenty per cent reduction in the number of foreign language assistants is to be deplored. (B1)

Schools Council

(1) In collaboration with examining bodies, the Schools Council should initiate experimental work on graded tests which, if found effective, could be integrated into the public examinations system in secondary and further education. (F2)

(2) The efficacy of mixed ability teaching of foreign languages should be investigated. (A4)

(3) The feasibility of intensive language courses in secondary schools should be studied. (A3)

(4) The Schools Council should conduct critical surveys of the following in order to encourage better practice:
   (a) Patterns of demand for language courses in secondary schools, taking into account especially the needs and aspirations of sixth formers;
   (b) Patterns of language provision in secondary schools;
   (c) The respective merits of preceding or following a language course by a course of European Studies. (B2)

Universities and polytechnics

(1) Intensive *ab initio* courses of the types outlined below should be developed in universities, polytechnics and colleges:
   (a) four to six week 'taster' courses;
   (b) two to three month custom-made courses;
   (c) one year courses in minority languages. (E2)

(2) Bearing in mind the extent to which potential students are motivated by career aspirations, universities and polytechnics should make known the extent to which British industry is actually concerned in promoting language study through sponsored places and other such arrangements. (B3)

(3) Information about language courses should be comprehensive and more widely distributed in a standard form intelligible to the sixth former. Careers teachers and advisers should be kept up to date by tertiary institutions acting together. (C6)

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